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ABSTRACT

This document describes the many benefits that arise when educators work together as a team to solve problems and share decisions. Although not a quick fix for problems in education, a team-oriented culture helps people feel better about themselves and their efforts, encouraging staff at various levels in the school district to work together for continuous improvement. This pamphlet discusses guidelines for implementing cross-functional teams in education, identifying the characteristics of teams that participate in problem solving. It offers seven steps to team success: team training; time; a true, balanced representation of groups; follow through on team recommendations; respect and trust; communication; and recognition. All these steps were derived from surveys and interviews of successful teams. It also describes the Team Empowerment Model in Education (TEME), which incorporates three basic support networks: team-support partnerships, internal district-support partnerships, and external client-support partnerships. Ten steps to starting a new team are described, as are strategies for facilitating team processes. Once a team is formed, it can employ the Quality Empowerment Survey for Teams, which can help it stay on track and can ensure that it remains a productive force. (Contains 14 references.) (RJM)

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Mary Ann Smialek

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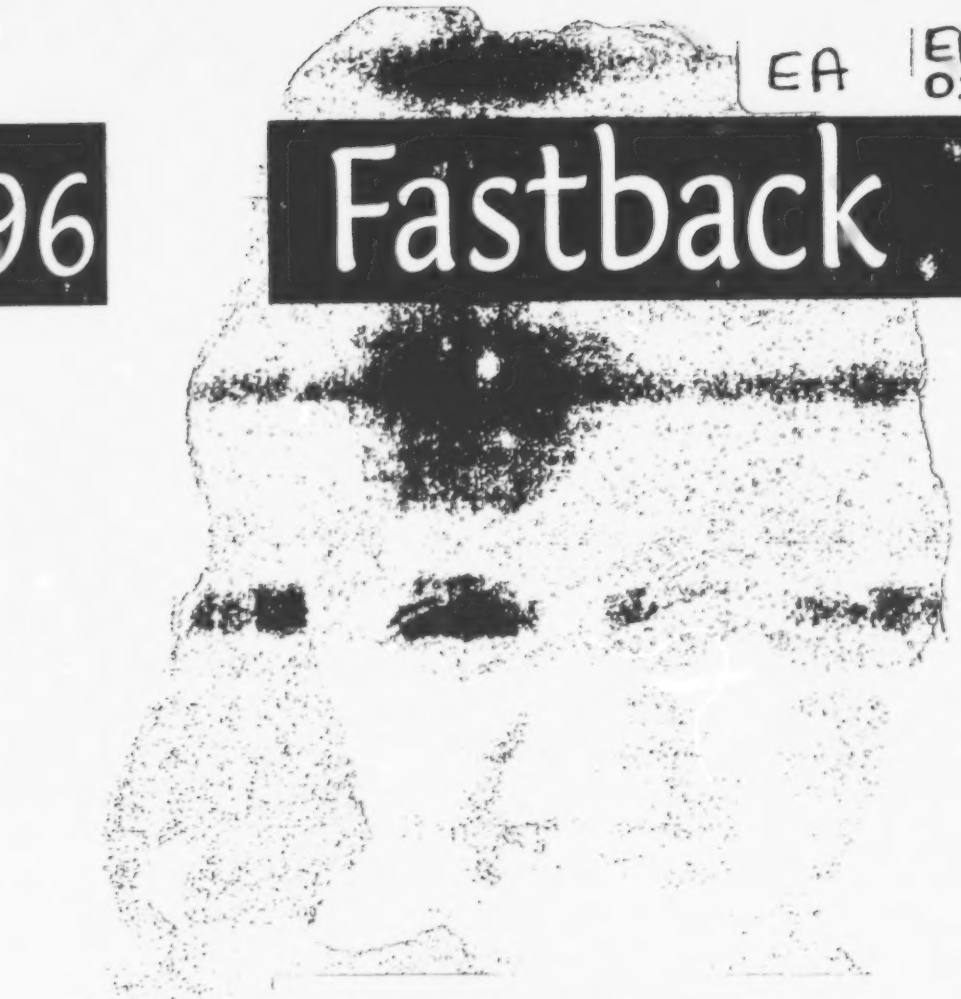

Inside Teams in Education

Mary Ann Smialek

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Series Editor, Donovan R. Walling

Inside Teams in Education

by
Mary Ann Smialek

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Introduction

As schools focus on continuous improvement efforts, teachers, parents, support staff, community members, and students must be involved together. There are many benefits when people at all levels of the organization work together as a team to solve problems and share decisions.

Schools must change if they are to meet the challenges and opportunities that arise every day. Until now, schools attempted to adopt changes without altering the existing systems and structures of education. However, to meet the needs of the future, school leaders must lead in unaccustomed and unconventional ways. They face a major challenge: to attract others to common purposes and then to empower them to act. Involving others in planning, solving problems, and implementing solutions is the next important step in initiating continuous improvement in education. Collaborative efforts are the key to revitalizing schools.

Teams have been adopted by business and industry, but they have not been fully accepted in education. Even though the literature about change in education is filled with calls to build relationships between schools and

their clients and to redefine the role of school leaders, teaming is not yet a common practice in schools.

Effective education leaders cannot do everything by themselves. They need to delegate some of their power and responsibilities. However, as education leaders empower others, they actually can increase their own leadership power. As education practitioners delegate their power and responsibility to others, a cooperative and cyclical process results. Since leaders have more time to spend in other areas, their own competencies are increased.

Treating staff members as professionals, listening to their suggestions, and encouraging them to engage in continuous self-improvement through a team-building process is the basis for a new leadership that will bring about significant changes in education. Shared power results in heightened job satisfaction and performance throughout the school system. When a process makes people feel they have a voice in the matters that affect them, they will have a greater commitment to the overall enterprise and will take greater responsibility for what happens in the organization.

The Power of Teams

Teams are not a quick fix for the problems in education. They cannot be successful if they are viewed as the "flavor of the month" or as "our project for this school year." The real rewards begin to emerge only when team processes become embedded in the culture of the school, when teams become simply the way things are done in a school.

The benefits of teams are tangible: people feel better about themselves and their efforts on the job and they take greater pride in their work. Relationships among people in the organization are honest and open. Administrators feel less isolated and misunderstood. Productivity goes up as work processes are continuously improved.

Continuous improvement is hard work and takes a long time. It is all too easy for one person's commitment and enthusiasm to falter during a long project, and it is difficult for any staff member consistently to devote both the time and effort to a continuous improvement effort. However, teams produce a mutual support and synergy that can overcome those problems. When people work together on an important project, they usually have enough energy to sustain their enthusiasm and to

support each other through difficult times and hectic school schedules.

Working in teams encourages staff empowerment, creates a sense of ownership, and produces responsiveness to the pursuit of continuous improvement. Team building shapes the staff's leadership and fosters collaboration by providing various school groups with the power to make a difference. Teamwork improves both instruction and curriculum. When staff members have a say in the conditions that affect their work lives, team members take on the responsibility for contributing as fully as possible to the school's success. The more people who believe that they can influence and guide the organization, the greater the organizational effectiveness and member satisfaction. Shared power results in greater job satisfaction and improved performance throughout the organization. In addition, when power is shared, the resulting positive attitudes can heighten the teams' motivation.

As a spirit of teamwork takes root, staff at various levels of the school district will begin working together toward continuous improvement; they begin to think of themselves as "all one team" moving together in the same direction. The team structure makes the connections, relationships, and possibilities that already are inherent in the organization appear evident, so the changes that need to be made flow from this process.

In order for teams to work, it is critical for everyone to understand a basic concept of teamwork, that everyone has a vital role in the organization. Quality is everyone's job and cannot be delegated to others.

Understanding this concept allows team members to decide what their goals should be and what kinds of problems they should be looking for, where to look for them, and what solutions are important. Professional and support staff, parents, and students know what must be done because they are close to the problems. They will pursue the best solutions. In addition, they must know which problems are caused by the overall system itself. Therefore, everyone in the system should be involved in studying the system and proposing how to improve it.

The success or failure of a team's school improvement endeavors will revitalize the entire school district because teams are highly visible entities. Thus it is necessary to understand clearly where teams fit into the overall restructuring and improvement plans of the school district and how to use them properly. Scholtes (1994) emphasizes that a team's real importance is the re-education of all school personnel.

Teams also help with a challenge faced by all administrators. One job of an education leader is to break down tasks into smaller units that can be tackled by individuals. Teams help to do this. They offer a systematic structure to address and prevent many problems that are too complex for one person or one group to solve. It is not as overwhelming as it sounds because the responsibility for securing that this happens rests not just with one person, but with everyone who has an interest in the future of quality education programs and services in a school.

In addition, administrators' ability to improve education is based on the partnerships and support they can

build with the community, board members, staff, and parents. These clients must be informed about the real "day to day" challenges of schools if administrators are going to maintain the support necessary to attain and sustain quality in education.

In order to realize these benefits, a school district needs a leader who believes that sharing leadership with teams, a proven strategy in business and industry, can be applied to an education environment. Someone has to champion the cause for teams.

However, education leaders will be ready to implement teams only when they are convinced of their own personal and professional abilities. They must overcome the fear of relinquishing their authority. They need to encourage their staff's professional development, use the staff's expertise, and provide feedback that is honest, specific, and shared without fear. The key to this type of direction is to believe in and act on this powerful thought: "Empower others and others will empower you."

Guidelines for Building Teams

My recent research focused on how teams facilitate systemic improvement in education. The purpose of the study was to develop guidelines for implementing cross-functional teams in education by identifying the characteristics of teams that participate in problem solving and shared decision making and by identifying any commonalities among the various teams.

The teams I studied varied in composition. They also varied in the kinds of things they achieved and their years of implementing quality improvement efforts in their school districts.

Two major areas of concern surfaced during my interviews with team members. More than half of the team members stressed the need for district-level staff development on team building. The need for more time for teaming processes during the school day was emphasized by one-half of the team members interviewed.

The results of this team study established commonsense guidelines. These were:

- Provide needed team-building training, including both technical skills and interpersonal relationship

skills, in the forms of a district staff development program and outside consultant training.

- Include the necessary time in the school schedule for the teaming process.
- Provide an environment where there is an openness to team members' opinions and ideas, coupled with support and encouragement of new ideas and follow through on team recommendations.
- Include a true, balanced representation of all school groups on teams and allow them to voice their own concerns.
- Respect and trust team members.
- Ensure effective and efficient methods of communication among team members, staff, administrators, parents, and community and board members.
- Recognize team members for their time and effort.

These guidelines are translated into the Seven Steps to Team Success.

Seven Steps to Team Success

The following seven steps are essential for team effectiveness and empowerment, according to the representative team members who were surveyed and interviewed. The steps are ranked in order of importance to team success.

1. Team Training: Team training ranked as the most significant step and was regarded as the most necessary element of team effectiveness and success. The issue of adequate training for teams was the foremost consid-

eration for improvement in all participating districts of the study. Allowance for staff training in the regular school schedule is needed to develop the climate necessary to value shared decision making in teams.

Restructuring the school day is a prerequisite for this project. Providing team-building training on scheduled early dismissal days or scheduled staff development days are important methods to do so.

Team training also is the vehicle that gives leaders regular and convenient times to generate and develop strategies for the facilitation of their teaming processes in order to carry on the team's continuous improvement efforts.

There are several questions to consider when training teams: What resources are needed for teams to be successful? How much training in team-building do teams in the district possess (for example: training in problem solving or group dynamics)? Is there a team sponsor or partnership to help with technical and interpersonal skills training? Is there a partnership between teams and union leaders in the district to support team endeavors?

2. *Time:* Staff must be trained to work smarter, but they need the time to do it. The second major step ranked by team members for team success was the issue of time in the regularly scheduled school day.

In the districts studied, team meetings were held before and after school, with some evening team meetings. Team members mentioned that they occasionally had release time for team meetings during the regularly

scheduled school day, but not in any consistent manner or scheduled time slot. School districts could use substitute teachers and community volunteers to provide release time for team meetings. Schedules should be developed that incorporate time for the teaming process.

Time for teaming is built into the regular day in business. It also is necessary for team success in education. For teams to be implemented, developed, and maintained, weaving ample time into the fabric of the school day, week, and year must be a focus for innovative school leaders. All team members on all district teams in this study ranked time for team processes as an important element with which to secure the success of sustained team efforts in education.

Questions that should be emphasized concerning the necessary resource of time for teaming include: When are team meetings scheduled in the school district? What are some alternatives that would work well in the district?

3. *A True, Balanced Representation of Groups:* All groups in the school community must be represented in a team and must be allowed to voice their own concerns. Thus educators should give serious consideration to the nature of their partners. Educators must make every effort to solicit the multiple voices of students, parents, school board, and community members and let them define their own version of quality, rather than allowing those who hold more power to speak for them. Team participants should be selected based not only on hierarchical position (administrators, teachers, community members, parents, and students) but also on social

status position (for example: teachers of students with disabilities, parents of students of color, and senior citizens on fixed incomes).

Teams work best when there are no struggles for power. A synergy results in the pooling of each individual team member's education, experience, talents, and support for team goals that will sustain team endeavors over a project's span.

Questions about representation include: How is teamwork, coordination, and collective efficiency demonstrated in the teams in your district? Are all the necessary groups represented on each team?

4. *Follow Through on Team Recommendations:* Administrators must follow through on team recommendations. This is necessary if teams are to be successful. It is disheartening to team members and detrimental to the teaming process to have team recommendations changed by an administrator. It also is a real waste of the team members' time if their recommendations are not honored. If administrators are not going to honor team recommendations, they should not have started the teaming process in the first place.

The issue of follow through on team recommendations appears to be a problem particular to education organizations. Education leaders not following through on team recommendations was a noted concern of team members in each of the researched school districts I studied. However, this was the only concern team members expressed that was not cited in a review of related literature on teams in business and industry.

Questions to ask regarding follow through on team recommendations include: Is your district leadership committed to solving problems through shared decision making? Do district systems and structures support a teaming environment in the school district?

5. Respect and Trust: Respect and trust are essential for innovation in our schools. A supportive environment that encourages taking risks needs to be created by both teams leaders and administrators to foster respect and trust. Team members' opinions should be valued.

A good attitude for team members to have when starting a team project is that "everything is a risk; and if something doesn't work out the first time, we'll try again." The team leader should be a direct, yet tactful, facilitator. Sometimes team leaders must put themselves on the line for the best interests of the team.

A "never say no" attitude is always helpful to have when working on a team; if one thing doesn't work out, encourage teams to try something else. Be willing to try new ideas. Encourage the team to take risks. Keep in mind that there is no one right answer to a problem. Take time at meetings to discuss all possibilities and aspects of the problem.

Questions to ask regarding respect and trust include: Are teams respected and trusted in your organization? Do the team leaders and team administrators model taking risks? Is a safety net provided for taking risks ("failure is acceptable," "we learn from our mistakes")? Do team leaders and team administrators value teaming processes?

6. Communication: Teams need information to do their work, and they need to communicate their ideas. Thus there must be effective and efficient methods to inform team members, staff, administrators, parents, and community members of what is going on in the teams and in the district. One option is to poll district members as to what methods of information dissemination would best suit both individual and district needs.

Teams need to collect essential information through several methods. They need to be able to develop ideas, identify critical elements, and use significant data. And they must be able to tell others about their findings.

Questions that target needed information strategies include: What types of information do the teams need? How are problems identified? How is data collected? How is data analyzed?

7. Recognition: While this is not a significant concern at the start of a project, it is important for the commitment to future team endeavors. The synergy that comes from team members working together productively usually is enough to sustain their enthusiasm and support them through difficult times and hectic schedules for a short term. To sustain teaming in the future, recognition for their contributions is necessary.

One strategy for ensuring recognition for teams is affirming team efforts with verbal and written commendations. Such affirmations have a cumulative effect that provides emotional support. Planning several districtwide events to recognize teams is another positive way to make the teaming processes attractive to

future team members. Team members should participate in planning these events. It is important for administrators to reward team contributions in ways that are meaningful to the team members themselves. The easiest and most effective way to do that is just to ask them for feedback.

Questions to ask concerning recognition of team members include: Are team members recognized? What types of recognition are team members given for their efforts? How are they rewarded?

The Team Empowerment Model in Education (TEME)

To build a culture of continuous learning and improvement, an education organization and its leaders need an action plan with steps to work toward team empowerment and a framework for applying them. It needs a system, a strategic process, that will enable successes for the team. Ensuring that certain elements, individuals, resources, agencies, systems, and structures are in place at various levels within and outside the organization will make team empowerment more likely.

In addition to the seven steps discussed above, the Team Empowerment Model for Education (TEME) incorporates the three cornerstones: team support partnerships, internal district support partnerships, and external client support partnerships.

Team support partnerships establish the necessary elements for team members to function as a group. Internal district support partnerships delineate the roles of the school district to ensure an environment for team empowerment. And external client support partnerships define the representation of client groups so that they can voice their own concerns. This external part-

nership also provides the technical support and the resources needed to improve the education system while ensuring client satisfaction.

To bring about successful teaming processes and to promote continuous improvement in education, the team, the district leadership, and the clients of the school district must cooperate. Successful education organizations are aware of these components and organize their growth around them. All three of these components must operate in a balanced fashion.

In order to support these necessary partnerships, there must be effective communication. Without this component, teams will not be able to achieve their goals. A team's success depends not only on how well team members communicate with each other, but also on how well they share their improvement efforts with the various levels of the organization. They need to establish effective methods of disseminating updates. This type of communication encourages cooperation from colleagues and often leads to suggestions for improving team processes.

Establishing and supporting these three partnerships is not an easy task. It depends on people and resources and requires time to implement, integrate, and refine. Essentially, team empowerment is all about leadership. It is about how the education leader realizes a vision of the future by making that vision manageable. The education leader must be confident in his or her own abilities and must not compromise on personal and professional ethics. He or she must keep in mind the welfare of both internal and external clients and the infinite

creative capacity of all of the individuals who make up the education organization.

Finding the right mix of team members is important in establishing team success. There must be a balanced participation among team members. Administrators do not pick team members. A team is made up of members who are affected by the problem and the solution. They must voice their own concerns. They are not chosen by a manager. All concerned will have their forum, along with the district's support of their efforts in teams.

The use of teams in education is a new concept. It is not an arbitrary process, and it must be orchestrated by committed and open leaders who support partnerships of all the clients of education. As the spirit of the teaming process becomes an integral part of the education system, all clients of education will together foster high-quality efforts. That is the power of teams in education.

Ten Steps to Starting a New Team

The team process usually begins with the superintendent and an administrative steering committee creating an initial pilot project team. In my work with teams, some principals took on this role in their schools and were quite successful in their endeavors.

The administrative steering committee, either at the district level or building level, generally will choose several issues for teams to address. This committee also establishes guidelines and the all-important timetables for results. It also is the job of the steering committee to provide any resources that the team will need to complete its work. Another important consideration at this point is to be sure that the team members' goals are aligned with the strategic plans of the district.

The following ten steps are helpful in getting a new team started. The following outline can be used as a checklist to increase a team's successful outcomes.

1. Select a project or problem to be addressed.
2. Select representative team members.

3. Set goals. Include long-term objectives (statement of purpose). Itemize short-term procedures (plan for completion). Develop a mission statement.
   - Clarify the focus of project.
   - Set boundaries.
   - Develop a schedule.
4. Focus on clients:
   - Determine who they are.
   - Clarify their expectations.
5. Focus on work processes:
   - Note improvement opportunities.
   - Gather data.
   - Analyze data (separate observation from inference).
6. Conduct productive meetings:
   - Use an agenda.
   - Employ team roles, including a facilitator, a timekeeper, a scribe (writes documentation during meeting for members), and a note taker (prepares minutes).
   - Draft the agenda for next meeting.
   - Summarize the decisions that were made.
   - Gain consensus on action plans.
   - Evaluate the meeting, including what went well and what improvements should be considered.
   - Communicate the meeting's conclusions to others.
7. Carry out proposed assignments.
8. Document the team's progress. Solicit effective methods of communication from your clients.

9. Initiate project closure:
    - Evaluate project completion.
    - Maintain improvements.
10. Celebrate the project's completion:
    - Recognize the team's efforts.
    - Choose appropriate ways to mark the team's success.

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Facilitating Team Processes

Teams, regardless of how well they are selected or how enthusiastically they start, can run into problems. The enthusiasm can wane. The team becomes uncertain of its direction.

In these and similar situations, there is a simple and easy strategy that works. First, consider this scenario:

Team A is in a dilemma. It can't pinpoint why it is faltering. Its vision has been set and its mission is defined. Key processes have been mapped. Statistical process controls have been employed. Methods for measuring team performance have been developed. Team members thought they had all the bases covered, yet the team's level of productivity and performance is still in question. The group doesn't know why, how, or where to begin to get back on track. Team members don't believe that optimal performance is achievable for their team and have not been able to pinpoint the team's strengths and weaknesses. What should the team do next?

When looking for a solution to team problems, it is important to remember that every team is different. No one method will jump-start and adequately serve every

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team in every way. Teams are different in physical, technical, education, and training makeup. Each team must find its own recipe for success.

A resource is needed to help identify critical issues and weave solutions into the team's structure. The sooner the team's needs are addressed, the sooner the team will succeed.

The Quality Empowerment Survey for Teams (QUEST) is a resource designed to help teams pinpoint challenges to success and capitalize on both individual member and team strengths. QUEST will clarify and remedy areas impeding team success. The key to this diagnostic tool is that it is easy to use and interpret. In a matter of minutes individual member and team strengths and weaknesses are evident. With this information, each area of concern can be broken into root causes that need corrective action.

QUEST is a survey instrument that is given to each member of the team. It examines 10 elements of team dynamics, such as respect and trust, recognition for contributions, communication, and others. The survey is printed below. Then scores are computed for both the individuals and the group, allowing for a variety of comparisons.

All organizations can benefit from the diagnostic and prescriptive properties of QUEST to identify individual and team strengths and the blind spots to team empowerment. It can help a team expand its knowledge and understanding of team interaction and effectiveness by fostering the skills, strategies, and techniques needed to achieve team empowerment. Without the

skills, abilities, and knowledge that such a resource can generate, teams can remain stifled and unable to successfully tackle problems and reach higher levels of performance.

With growing frequency, the team's success will prove that such principles as focusing on customers, using data effectively, improving processes, and working cooperatively are not just buzzwords; they are fundamental to creating more effective organizations.

When trying to turn a team around, the challenge to leaders and facilitators is not always obvious. Identifying the team' s strengths and weaknesses and taking the time to analyze them will maximize the team's success.

The Quality Empowerment Survey for Teams (QUEST)

The Quality Empowerment Survey for Teams (QUEST) is a very useful tool for analyzing both the strengths of a team and those of its members. Each member of the team takes the survey, and the member's scores are averaged to calculate the team's score.

QUEST

The QUEST uses a five-part scale: strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), strongly disagree (4), and undecided (5).

Respect and Trust

1. I feel respected by team members.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Team members trust each other.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Our team is trusted by its peers.	1 2 3 4 5

4. Our team is respected by management. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I am encouraged to take risks. 1 2 3 4 5

Recognition

1. I am recognized for my contributions to our team. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Our team expects the best from each member. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Management recognizes individual efforts. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Management recognizes team efforts. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Our organization recognizes people for their ability, not for whom they know. 1 2 3 4 5

Team Communications

1. Team members talk openly about ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Team members talk openly about problems. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Team members actively listen to each other. 1 2 3 4 5
4. The team regularly communicates with management. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Conflicts are confronted quickly and solved. 1 2 3 4 5

Information

1. I have all the information needed to do my job. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Our team has all the information needed to do its job. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Individuals are kept informed of what is going on in the team. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Individuals are kept informed of what is going on in the organization. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Our team knows how to get needed information. 1 2 3 4 5

Decision Making and Problem Solving

1. Members are encouraged to speak out. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Adequate time is spent searching for innovative solutions. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Members use win-win techniques. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Decisions are not evaluated without being fully discussed. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Solutions are not evaluated without being fully discussed. 1 2 3 4 5

Resources

1. Our team receives needed resources on time. 1 2 3 4 5
2. The members of our team have all the necessary technical skills. 1 2 3 4 5
3. The members of our team have all the necessary team skills. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Priorities are consistently clear. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Management support is clearly available when needed. 1 2 3 4 5

Initiative and Creativity

1. Our team has full support for taking initiatives. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Individual initiative is encouraged by our team. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Team initiative is encouraged by the organization. 1 2 3 4 5

4. It is easy for our team to suggest new ideas for improving processes and products. 1 2 3 4 5
5. It is easy for the team to try new ideas for improving processes and products. 1 2 3 4 5

Goal Clarity

1. Our team knows and understands the team's goals. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Our team is committed to the team's goals. 1 2 3 4 5
3. My individual goals match the team's goals. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Our team allows me the opportunity for personal growth. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Our team allows me the opportunity for career growth. 1 2 3 4 5

Teamwork

1. Individuals on our team work well together to solve difficult problems. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Individuals on our team focus on the team, not themselves. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Our team does not focus on one or two "superstars." 1 2 3 4 5
4. We are well organized to produce a high-quality output. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Our team processes are efficient and timely. 1 2 3 4 5

Organizational Systems and Structures

1. Organizational policies are consistent with team goals. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Our team interacts easily with other teams in our organization. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Team empowerment in our organization can occur without changing major systems and structures. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Our team can be empowered without changing current systems and structures. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Our team can be empowered without changing current organization policies. 1 2 3 4 5

Each member of the team calculates his or her score for each of the 10 empowerment factors. Then the team determines its average totals for each factor. The team should be especially concerned with any item that scores a team average higher than 2.0. The team also should be concerned with any factor in which the range of scores is greater than 1.0 because that indicates a divergence in the team members' views.

Analysis and Interpretation

Once the team's strengths and weaknesses are known, the results can be analyzed and interpreted. The team can use this information to employ its strengths to overcome its weaknesses. For example, Team A's strengths and weaknesses include the following:

Strengths

- New ideas are supported and encouraged.
- Conflicts quickly are confronted and resolved.
- Team processes are timely and efficient.

Weaknesses

- Team members do not actively listen to one another.
- Decisions and solutions are not fully discussed.
- Team members' goals do not match team goals.

While the weaknesses might be hindering the group from doing its work, an honest appraisal will lead them to see that their strengths can be used to remediate the team's weaknesses.

When analyzing Team A's weaknesses, it is learned that team members do not actively listen to one another. This is a major failing of this team because effective listening is not only one of the most important methods for acquiring knowledge and problem solving, it also can be the hardest and most active work any team member is called on to do.

If team members don't actively listen, decisions and solutions cannot be fully discussed. This leads to an underlying problem of Team A, which is that the members' goals do not match team goals. This indicates that the member makeup of Team A is not suitable to make decisions effectively and to solve problems that are consistent with achieving the team's goals.

During this stage of the team's analysis, it may be necessary to secure more appropriate representation on the team or perhaps to monitor or adjust the team's goals while keeping the original members. The latter solution may be best because the team's strengths, identified during the QUEST process, indicate that they accept and support new ideas and thus would be likely to revise or change their goals. Other strengths of the team that would support adjusting the team's goals are the team's willingness to confront conflicts quickly.

A thorough analysis encompassing all strengths and weaknesses of Team A is presented here, but other team analyses need not be as detailed. By reflecting on a

team's strengths and weaknesses, team leaders, facilitators, and even team members can change the team for the better. If the team does not feel comfortable employing a detailed analysis like the one presented, then it should start by focusing on just one of the team's weaknesses.

When the team identifies a weakness, it should ask why that weakness exists. When this question is answered successfully, the team should break the finding into smaller parts and ask the same question of each part. In that way, the team will come closer and closer to identifying the roadblock to its effectiveness. As the team becomes more comfortable with the QUEST process, team strengths and weaknesses will become easier to analyze.

The QUEST provides results that allow the team to diagnose setbacks to its progress. What team members do with the results is up to them. The degree of analysis and interpretation of the team's survey results will depend on how, when, and where the team chooses to use them.

Employing the QUEST confirms the value of the team's power and focuses on areas that present a challenge. Using a resource such as the QUEST helps team leaders, members, and facilitators maximize a team's task and relationship energy when working on situations that demand change. A little time and effort will yield a great output.

The strength of the QUEST process is that it uses a common tool to educate all members of the team so that they can communicate in a common language. While

pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of the team, there will be no guessing about the causes of problems. The QUEST also allows the team to focus on solving problems. The QUEST is a powerful tool that can help address the team's needs and help it reach its potential.

The QUEST has been used successfully in school districts. It also has been tested successfully in business and health-care organizations. The largest private-hospital management company in Germany, currently operating 52 hospitals with 14,000 beds, has improved both processes and products within their organization by using this diagnostic prescriptive tool. And the QUEST has been adapted for use in business to help improve international teaming processes between engineers in the United States and France working on a joint project.

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